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Viewing cable 06MANAGUA2195, OAS UPDATES ELECTION POSTURE

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06MANAGUA2195**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06MANAGUA2195	2006-10-04 17:26	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Managua

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758456.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758467.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758468.aspx>
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<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2758764.aspx>
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<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2757239.aspx>
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<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2746673.aspx>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3991/dra-yadira-centeno-desmiente-cable-diplomatico-eeuu>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3968/pellas-pronostico-a-eeuu-victoria-de-ortega-en-2006>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3967/barreto-era-ldquo-fuente-confiable-rdquo-para-eeuu>

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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC

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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CEN, WHA/USOAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/03/2026
TAGS: [KDEM](#) [NU](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#)
SUBJECT: OAS UPDATES ELECTION POSTURE

¶1. (C) POL TDYers met on 29 September with OAS country electoral mission coordinator Patricio Gajardo to discuss the OASQ observation mission and election procedural issues. Gajardo noted that the Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) had announced final numbers for the number of registered voters and of polling tables to be open on election day. He expects the total voter turnout to be between 2.6 and 2.8 million, who will cast their votes from one of 11,274 voting tables (JRVs). After the polls close, the JRV officials will tally the various races and submit the results; the data on the presidential race will be submitted electronically direct to a CSE central repository. The OAS will place observers at points throughout the process, and Gajardo noted that his organization maintains a fairly good working relationship with the CSE. END SUMMARY.

THE NUMBERS

¶2. (SBU) OAS country electoral mission coordinator Patricio Gajardo met with POL TDYers on 29 September to discuss the election process and the readiness of the OAS election observation mission. He had received an advance copy from the Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) of the final figures for the voter rolls and voting precincts indicating there will be 11,274 individual voting tables (JRVs) at 4,296 polling places on election day. The final voter roster (padron electoral) lists 3.6 million eligible voters, but Gajardo estimated that the number of voters likely to go to the polls on election day will be between 2.6 and 2.8 million. He noted that the discrepancy can be explained by the fact that the roster does not fully reflect people who may have left the country, died, or who simply do not intend to vote.

¶3. (SBU) Gajardo was bullish on what he views as a robust observation effort. On the international front, he said that the OAS plans to field about 140 observers, the EU 130, and the Carter Center 50. (COMMENT: The Embassy plans to field between 40-50 observers. END COMMENT.) He noted that the number of national observers will be much larger -- local NGO Etica y Transparencia alone plans to field one observer in each of the JRVs. The NGO community is also training members of the Liberal Nicaraguan Alliance (ALN) and Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS) to represent their parties at the polls on election day.

CASTING THE VOTES AND COUNTING THE RESULTS

¶4. (SBU) Each JRV will display four ballot boxes for

voters to insert their votes for each of the four races: the president, national Assembly deputy slate, regional deputy slate, and deputy slate for the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN). Gajardo noted that the ballots are made distinct by a color coding system. However, he noted that the similarities between the colors for some of the ballots could cause some confusion in those JRVs that are poorly lit - he pointed out that much of the counting will be done in the evening.

15. (SBU) The JRVs will be located in local schools or other public buildings. Each location is supposed to be equipped with a light source and electricity, but this requirement may not always be met. Many, if not most, locations will be hot (i.e. lacking air conditioners or fans) and may have as little as one light source. Gajardo commented that such conditions could cause tensions to run high late in the evenings during the crucial counting phase. JRV officials will need to be present from the opening of the JRV at 0530 to begin preparations. The polls themselves will open at 0700 and officially close at 1800, but voting will not end until all those who were in line by 1800 have cast their ballots. (COMMENT: The JRV members are required to be present for the entire process. The party poll watchers (fiscales) and observers are not bound to be present by law, but will almost certainly be instructed by their backers, particularly those from the various parties, to stay throughout the process. END COMMENT.)

16. (SBU) Once the last ballot has been cast, the JRV officials will open the ballot box for the presidential vote and begin counting. The results are tallied by hand on a draft sheet. Once the presidential ballot box is emptied, the JRV members conduct a final count of the ballots to ensure that they have counted one for each voter. Upon entering the JRVs, voters will be handed four ballots and are required to submit all four ballots in their corresponding boxes after marking them. If the final count does not correspond to the total number of voters to have visited the JRV that day, the officials then open the remaining boxes to see whether the missing ballots have been misfiled.

17. (SBU) Once the presidential vote count has been completed by the JRV, the results are transferred from the draft tally sheet to an official one. The officials then proceed with counting the ballots for the other races. After the counting is complete, the results of the presidential count are transmitted electronically to the CSE central repository where they are compiled with the results from the other voting places. The process of tallying the remaining races is the same for the subsequent three boxes, except that those results will not be electronically submitted. Instead, the official tally sheets will be delivered to the CSE by the JRV members.

18. (SBU) Gajardo claimed that about 80% of the electronic ballot transmissions will be sent via fax or scanner. The remaining ones will be sent in by satellite phone & these latter will be mostly from remote localities. Gajardo noted that each of the tally sheets will be scrambled into a code, submitted, and will only be decoded once they arrive at the mainframe at the designated CSE processing center. There CSE technicians will unscramble the code and put the results into a readable number format. Gajardo noted that there are 2-3 security controls to keep the transcribers in check. In addition, OAS and EU technicians will be at this facility acting as observers. (COMMENT: We have recently heard from discussions with a phone company executive that the transmissions may not be scrambled at all. We are looking into this and other transmission-related issues, on which we will report separately. END COMMENT.)

19. (SBU) Gajardo estimated that the faster-moving tables could finish the whole counting process in about four hours after the polls close. Assuming that voting stops around

1800, these JRVs could begin submitting their results by about 2200. The JRVs are not allowed to break until they wrap up their efforts. Thus, some JRVs could be counting far into the night or early the next morning.

¶10. (SBU) Gajardo noted that the ballot boxes will ultimately be sealed by the JRV workers and transported to CSE headquarters. The ballots themselves will be transported in a CSE vehicle, while accompanied by a caravan of police or military escort, the fiscales, and other party representatives. The official results of the elections must be announced by 15 November when all challenges must also have been resolved.

OAS CONTROLS

¶11. (SBU) OAS observers plan to track the presidential tallies from approximately 100 randomly chosen polling centers to ensure that they make it through the entire process without manipulation. At these locations the observers will oversee the entire counting process as well as the transmission of the data. OAS observers working at the CSE central repository of the transmissions will witness how CSE technicians process the data and incorporate it into the final official results.

¶12. (SBU) Gajardo noted that the OAS will be mounting a quick count effort at about 70 tables selected from rural and urban areas in all departments. The results will go straight to the OAS election center; Gajardo expects these to be accurate within a margin of 1.5 to 2%. He admitted, however, that in a close election these counts would not necessarily be able to firmly predict the outcome. He noted that Etica y Transparencia will be doing another quick count with a much larger sample Q in the range of about 1,000 tables.

WHAT ABOUT A SECOND ROUND?

¶13. (SBU) Gajardo noted that the OAS has thought about a second round observation mission, but has not yet worked out the details. He estimated that the OAS would field only around 30 observers, but that the organization had yet to work out the finances. He expects a second round mission of about this size to cost around \$400,000.

OAS-CSE RELATIONS

¶14. (SBU) Gajardo said that his relations with the CSE are relatively good, noting that he enjoys access to all divisions of the council, and that he meets weekly with Rodrigo Barreto, whom he characterized as CSE President Roberto RivasQ right-hand-man. He added that the CSE has been responsive to his suggestions on occasions, and cited the CSEQs decision to change some of the procedural requirements at the JRV level which the OAS cited as potentially problematic. Specifically, Gajardo referred to the CSEQs announcement that all JRV members had to sign the official paperwork of the JRV, changing the pre-existing stipulation that said the failure of one JRV representative to sign would be grounds to throw out the all the votes from that voting table.

PLC AND FSLN BETTER PREPARED THAN THEIR NEWER COUNTERPARTS

¶15. (SBU) Gajardo noted that the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) is clearly the best-prepared of the political parties. QThey know everythingQ he said when referring to Sandinista knowledge of the rules and regulations pertaining to the election. The same holds

true for the Liberal Constitutional Party (PLC), which according to Gajardo, Qknows this by heart.Q Much of this expertise is due, he said, to the fact that these parties have been involved in writing and re-writing the electoral code to suit their interests since 1990.

¶16. (C) By contrast, Gajardo noted that the Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS) and the Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (ALN) are less familiar with the details and are somewhat Qnaove.Q He noted that representatives from these parties' central headquarters often Qdo not know what is going onQ or that they are too hesitant to raise complaints with the CSE; they would rather raise a fuss after the election when it may be too late. That said, Gajardo was upbeat when referring to the fiscales and JRV representatives now going through the ALN and MRS training processes. He noted that the parties have worked very closely with local NGOs to develop solid training measures, which frequently include mock elections. (COMMENT: According to ALN and MRS contacts, many of their party poll watchers and JRV officials are experienced as they worked in these positions in the past with the PLC and FSLN, respectively. END COMMENT.)

IRI MANUALS WATER UNDER THE BRIDGEQFOR THE MOST PART
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¶17. (C) Gajardo noted that while IRI faces a pending legal case filed by the CSE over its issuance of training manuals the CSE claims contained outdated information, IRI will most likely be allowed to continue its operations. He suggested, however, that the manuals had irked many besides the CSE board. He said that the colors (red, white, and blue) and reference to former President Ronald Reagan in the introductory note turned many people off and raised questions that the material was politicized. While the IRI will probably be able to resolve its legal battles, Gajardo suspects that the CSE will make former IRI official Gilberto Valdez, who is now working with the ALN, the Q fall guy.Q

¶18. (C) COMMENT: Post has heard from several sources that the electronic transmission process of the results may be susceptible to several problems, including power outages, faulty or missing telephone cables, or fraud. We are following up on these possibilities and will report on our findings septel. END COMMENT.
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